तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Guru is Not Ordinary

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

One is forbidden to accept the guru, spiritual master, as an ordinary human being (*guruṣu nara-matiḥ*). When Ramananda Ray spoke to Pradyumna Mishra, Pradyumna Mishra could understand that Ramananda Ray was not an ordinary human being. A spiritually advanced person who is authorized to act as the spiritual master speaks as the Supreme Personality of Godhead dictates from within. Thus it is not he that is personally speaking. In other words, when a pure devotee or spiritual master speaks, what he says should be accepted as having been directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the *paramparā* system.

— Purport to *Cc. antya* 5.71

Guru-seva is Not Easy

Once there was a guru living in an ashram on the bank of the Ganga with a few *brahmacārī* disciples. He was engaging them in varieties of devotional service, like cooking, serving *prasādam*, gardening, cleaning pots, taking care of the cows, etc. One disciple, named Govardhan, whose nickname was Govara, had a daily service to go to the river with a big water pot and collect Ganga water for the ashram. He did that service very sincerely for the pleasure of his guru. But after some time, he thought, "Why is it that although I have been doing this service for so long I am not feeling any happiness? Maybe I should leave this ashram, go to a big city, get married, and enjoy the rest of my life." From his childhood he had lived in the ashram and performed *sevā*. He had no idea of anything else, no experience of any big cities — he didn't even know where they were. Day by day he was thinking very deeply about this. Finally one day, while sitting on the bank of the Ganga, he decided, "Why should I continue to supply Ganga water to this ashram? I am not getting any benefit. I won't do it anymore. Today somehow or other I will leave. I have heard that all the big cities like Kasi and Prayag are on the bank of the Ganga. If I follow the river bank then eventually I must reach one of them." He filled up his water pot with Ganga water, put it down, and told the pot, "You remain here. I am going." He looked around to make sure that no one was watching, and then began to slowly make his way towards the south.

He had only gone a few yards when he suddenly heard a voice, "Hey, where you going?" Startled and frightened, he looked back, but he couldn't see where the voice had come from. He looked all around, and seeing no

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one, again started to walk. But suddenly the same voice called, "Hey, where you going?"

He became more fearful, "Who is calling?" He was surprised that he couldn't see anyone. Looking in all directions, he crouched down close to the ground and tried to flee as fast as he could, dodging here and there. But again the voice came, "Hey Govara, where are you going? It's me calling you — your water pot. Come here!" Govara became stunned. He was amazed to find his water pot calling him in a human voice.

With great eagerness he rushed back to speak with it. The water pot started chastising him: "Do you really think that leaving your *guru-sevā* will give you peace and pleasure? The chief result of your service will be the fulfillment of life's ultimate goal. Although I am made of dull matter, I can speak like a human being because my life is successful due to my giving service to a pure devotee of the Lord." Govara's guru was a very powerful and pure *vaiṣṇava*. He was making the water pot speak.

The water pot continued, "I originated from a muddy, contaminated place. One man collected me, took me to his house, and began to knead me by pressing heavily with his feet. He then formed me into this water pot shape, let me dry, and eventually burnt me in a fire. Finally, he picked me up and flicked me with his finger to see if I had the right sound — 'ting'. I passed the test, so he took me to the market to sell. Fortunately I was purchased by this *sādhu* and engaged in his service. The result is that my life became successful and I am able to speak with you directly. You shouldn't think that your *guru-sevā* will be very easy, but if you engage in this *sevā* then your life will be a success like mine and you will get real pleasure and happiness. Otherwise, if you leave this service you will have to cry and cry. Instead of pleasure you will only get so much pain and anxiety."

Hearing this story from the water pot, Govara started trembling. Somehow he managed to carry the pot filled with water back to the ashram, where he fell flat before his spiritual master. His guru knew everything because he was a *divya-dṛṣṭa* — he could see the past, present and future. He asked Govara, "What happened to you?" Govara spoke of his experience with the water pot and started crying when he revealed how he had planned to leave his guru's service. His guru pacified him, and said, "*Āre bābā*! It was not the water pot speaking to you. It was I that spoke through it." That guru was a most powerful *vaiṣṇava;* he could speak through anything. He advised Govara that staying in the guru's ashram and engaging in pure devotional service would gradually purify him, and in a similar way to the water pot he could make his human birth a success.

— As told by Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami in Oriya. Translated by Bhakta Pradosh.

The Meeting of Parshuram and Lord Ramachandra

Part one of a six-part series

Reverend A. G. Atkins

(For more about Reverend Atkins, see Bindu 116.)

When King Janaka decided to arrange for the marriage of his daughter Sita, he called all the kings to attend the svayamvara ceremony. He announced that anyone who could string the powerful bow of Lord Shiva, given to his family many generations previously by the demigods, would win her hand. One after another, the assembled kings failed to even lift the bow off the ground, much less string it, and they retreated in shame. Then it was Lord Ramachandra's turn to try, and he not only lifted it and strung it, but also broke it in two, winning Sita's hand. However, many of the kings were envious, and they loudly challenged Lord Ram to fight:

As they looked upon Sita, inflamed with desire
The wild foolish kings all with rage were on fire;

They put on their armor, their weapons they seized
And in mocking and boasting their feelings released:

"Come, let us take Sita and carry her off;
"Let us bind up the princes right now," was their scoff.

"The bow broken? That's nothing! We've no misgiving;
"Can anyone marry the maid while we're living?

"If Janak should offer them any assistance,
"We'll fight him as well and break down all resistance."

The good rulers answered, on hearing these things,
"You have covered with shame this assembly of kings;

"Your strength, prowess, glory and pride are all scattered
"Forever, since now the great bow has been shattered;

"You boasted in vain; what new might have you found?
"Vaunting fools; God has brought all your pride to the ground.

"Feast your eyes upon Rama; give up foolish envy
"And pride; let this lesson be learnt —
"The anger of Lakshman is like a fierce fire;
"Rouse him not, or like moths you'll be burnt.

"You're like crows that would rob the Bird-King, Great Garur *;
"Or like hares that a tiger's own prey would secure;

"Like men vexed without cause, who yet want peace and health;
"Or like Lord Shiva's foes, who yet want joy and wealth;

"Like men greedy and grasping, who want a good name;
"Or like lechers, who want to avoid guilt and shame;

"Like those souls God-forsaking, who want supreme bliss;
"Foolish kings, all your lust is as foolish as this."

Then Sita, distressed at a scene so unfitting,
In fear took her maids where her mother was sitting;

And Rama returned to his master in quiet,
Of Sita's love thinking and uplifted by it.

Sita sat near the queens, at heart this thought brewing,
"And now let us see what the Lord God is doing."

While Lakshman, as those raving monarchs he heard,
Looked all ways, but for Rama's sake spoke no word.

With red eyes, knitted brows, on the wild noisy kings
He cast one fiery, furious glance,
Like a young lion eager to spring on a band
Of wild elephants — waiting his chance.

The people, as this noisy tumult encroached
On their joy, with one mind the mad monarchs reproached.

Just then, by the breaking bow brought to the place,
Parshuram entered, sun of the great Lotus-race;

The kings, when they saw him, shrank back dumb and pale,
As, when the hawk swoops, shrinks the poor timid quail;

His body was fair and all covered with ashes;
Broad forehead adorned with the three Saivite splashes;

Long hair in a mass above face like the moon,
Which was red from his rage — not quenched easy or soon;

Brows drawn in a frown and eyes angrily flashing,
He glanced quickly round him, all high feelings quashing;

His arms big and strong; and across bull-like shoulders
Birth-thread, beads and deer-skin attracting beholders;

Scant cloth round his loins, and two full quivers hung;
In one hand bow and shaft; axe on one shoulder slung.

In saintly attire, but with ways and appearance
And actions unspeakably savage;
The fierce martial spirit incarnated seemed
'Mong the monarchs, their kingdoms to ravage.

The kings all stood up overwhelmed and dismayed,
At so awesome a figure alarmed and afraid;

Before Parshuram in deep reverence falling,
Each made himself known, on his forefathers calling.

He turned a kind natural glance upon some;
But even these felt that their last days had come.

Then Janak came forward and, reverence showing,
Called Sita, who also came up humbly bowing.

He gave her his blessing; her maidens delighted
Then led her to where their own comp'ny was seated.

* Alternate spelling of Garuda.

Came saint Visvamitra also with the others,
And rev'rently brought to his feet the two brothers;

The two sons of Dasrath, without any scruple,
He bless'd as a noble and worthy young couple;

At Rama he gazed with look long and intense,
Whose beauty would shatter a Love-god's pretence.

Then, turning to Janak, he said, "Tell me why "All these people this place have invaded."
He knew very well, yet he asked as unknowing, While anger his whole frame pervaded.

King Janak then told Parshuram the whole story,
And why all the kings had come there in their glory.

He listened and then turned his glance to one side,
And the broken bow there on the ground he espied;

Then, heated and angry, he said with a bellow,
"Who's, broken the bow, Janak? Tell me, damn'd fellow;

"Tell quickly, you fool, or as I'm standing here,
"Your whole kingdom today I'll o'erthrow! Do you hear?"

The king could not answer, from fear well-nigh maddened;

The wild perverse monarchs were secretly gladdened;

The gods, saints, dumb creatures and citizens all
Were afraid in their hearts dread disaster must fall;

Sita's mother deep down in her heart was lamenting,
"God's spoilt the whole thing when we thought Him consenting."

To Sita an instant seemed ten thousand years;
Word of Parshuram's temper revived all her fears.

- continued in the next issue -

— *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*. Published by Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva-sansthan. Mathura, India. 1987. Pages 332-337.

A Prayer to Radharaman

By the medieval poet Sri Rama Das

dhānaśī-rāga

hari he dayāla mora jaya rādhā-nātha
bāra bāra ei bāra laha nija sātha

O Lord Hari, please be merciful to me! O Lord of Radha, all glories to you! Again and again and again I beg: Please accept me as one of your associates!

bahu yoni bhrami nātha la-inu śaraṇa
nija guṇe kṛpā kara adhama-tāraṇa

O Lord, wandering in this world, I took shelter of many different wombs. O deliverer of the fallen, please be merciful to me.

jagata-tāraṇa tumi jagata-jīvana
tomā chāḍā kāra nahi he rādhā-ramaṇa

You are the savior of the worlds. You are the life of the worlds. O Lord Radha-raman, please do not turn away from me.

bhuvana-maṅgala tumi bhuvanera pati
tumi upekṣile nātha ki ha-ibe gati

You are the auspiciousness of the worlds. You are the master of the worlds. What will happen to persons who turn from you?

bhāviyā dekhinu ei jagata mājhāre
tomā vinā keha nāi e rāme uddhāre

I have carefully searched throughout the world, O Lord. There is no one but you that can deliver this Rama Das.

— Translated from *Gaura-pada-taraṅginī*, edited by Jagadbandhu Bhadra. Sri Gauranga Press. Calcutta. 1931. Bengali. Page 361.

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